

Is James Crockett Becoming Part of the Story?

Reporters at USMPRIDE.COM have put together a report examining the court decisions that came out of “Operation Pretense,” the codename for the FBI’s 1980s operation to expose county corruption (e.g., kickbacks, busted invoices, etc.) in Mississippi. In Table 1 below, you will find the names of the 38 Mississippi county officials who were ordered to pay restitutions -- with amounts ranging from \$66 to \$15,100 -- as a result of the FBI's sting operation (James Crockett, *Operation Pretense*, 2003).

Additionally, reporters at USMPRIDE.COM reviewed four of the 2006 reports available on this website that document possible cases of abuse of taxpayer funds by the CoB's own James Crockett, the former Morgan Professor of Accounting and author of *Operation Pretense*, the book that tells the story of the 1980s FBI sting operation in the Mississippi counties. Readers may recall these reports: two dealt with conference trips made by Crockett to Destin, Florida, in 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005, while the other two detailed conference trips made by Crockett to Nashville, Tennessee, and Covington, Kentucky. The Destin reports showed that Crockett stayed with extended family in spacious, but expensive accommodations, a move that appears to have cost USM (through his reimbursement filings) almost \$600 in incrementals. The latter two involved such things as a side trip to the Smokey Mountains of east Tennessee. These two trips resulted in what appears to be about another \$200 in incremental charges to Mississippi taxpayers.

Each of Crockett's possible over-billing amounts (5 separate line items) were slotted into the table below. Crockett's trip to Nashville in 1997, wherein it appears that he over-billed Mississippi taxpayers by \$60, falls at the bottom of the table, or \$6 below the restitution order handed down to Hancock County official Burt Courrege. However, Crockett's trips the Destin in 2005 and Covington in 2002 appear to include over-billing in the amount of \$150 and \$135, respectively. These amounts are each more than twice the amount of restitution that Courrege was ordered to pay in restitution as a result of "Operation Pretense." Next, Crockett's 2002 and 2004 trips to Destin reveal what appears to be over-billing in the amount of \$222 and \$213.18, respectively. These amounts are not only larger than that in Courrege's restitution order, they are also much larger than the restitution (\$168) that Newton County official Durwood "Doc" Pinson was ordered to pay.

Table 1 Restitution Orders from “Operation Pretense”		
<u>County Official</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Restitution Ordered</u>
John Allen Cockerham	Monroe	\$15,100.00
Eddie Burrell	Claiborne	\$12,100.00
Billy Joe Harris	Lauderdale	\$ 4,400.00
Alfred Grant Revette	Wayne	\$ 4,042.00
Henry Mack Smith	Newton	\$ 3,023.00
Barry “Ted” Berry	Copiah	\$ 2,753.00
John M. Crocker	Greene	\$ 2,700.00
Charles “Hop” Blakeney	Smith	\$ 2,340.00
Jimmy T. Duvall	Wayne	\$ 2,247.00

Wiley Tom Wade	Covington	\$ 2,115.72
Trudie P. Westmoreland	Perry	\$ 2,003.00
Thomas Jack Jones	Leake	\$ 1,839.98
William E. Edwards	Newton	\$ 1,630.00
John S. Holly	Neshoba	\$ 1,609.00
Roger Dale Ladner	Hancock	\$ 1,598.25
William Brown	Lauderdale	\$ 1,516.15
Rex L. Graham	Jasper	\$ 1,506.00
Sidney Thompson	Copiah	\$ 1,474.65
Kermit Rayborn	Lamar	\$ 1,200.00
James N. Travirca	Hancock	\$ 1,100.00
Larry Miller	Winston	\$ 1,051.40
Eddie Moffatt	Harrison	\$ 950.00
Sam J. Perniciaro, Jr.	Hancock	\$ 946.12
G.F. Mixon	Perry	\$ 920.00
John Robert Ulmer	Jasper	\$ 892.00
Maury Thompson	Jackson	\$ 880.00

James R. Crockett, author of *Operation Pretense*, may have over-billed taxpayers by **\$771.36** over just 5 trips

Francis M. Spivey	Clarke	\$ 765.00
Lauvon Pierce	Greene	\$ 730.00
George Ivan Smith	Greene	\$ 666.00
Leonard Faulkner	Monroe	\$ 623.00
Lige Becton	Clarke	\$ 609.00
James L. Freeny	Leake	\$ 583.00
Arlo Winstead	Neshoba	\$ 421.00
David Fancher	Attala	\$ 370.00
Pascal Lott	Lamar	\$ 350.00
Isaac Weems, Jr.	Scott	\$ 230.00

James R. Crockett's June 2002 trip to Destin, FL --- may have over-billed by \$222.00

James R. Crockett's June 2004 trip to Destin, FL --- may have over-billed by \$213.18

Durwood "Doc" Pinson	Newton	\$ 168.00
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James R. Crockett's June 2005 trip to Destin, FL --- may have over-billed by \$150.00

James R. Crockett's April 2002 trip to Covington, KY --- may have over-billed by \$135.00

Burt Courrege	Hancock	\$ 66.00
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James R. Crockett's April 1997 trip to Nashville, TN --- may have over-billed by \$60.00

Sources: Crockett, James R. *Operation Pretense: The FBI's Sting on County Corruption in Mississippi*, University Press of Mississippi, 2003; "James Crockett's Travel: Lost in the Smokies," usmpride.com, 2006; "James Crockett's Travel: Paradise Found," usmpride.com, 2006; "Crockett & Family in the Music City," usmpride.com, 2006; "James Crockett's Travel: Back To the Beach," usmpride.com, 2006.

Of course, as with the county officials above, Crockett's possible over-billing should be accumulated. Crockett's total comes to \$771.36 (in 5 trips), a sum that exceeds the restitution orders of Francis Spivey (Clarke), Lauvon Pierce (Greene), George Smith (Greene), Leonard Faulkner (Monroe), Lige Becton (Clarke), James Freeny (Leake), Arlo Winstead (Neshoba), David Fancher (Attala), Pascal Lott (Lamar), Isaac Weems, Jr. (Scott), Pinson (Newton), and Courrege

(Hancock). The 12 restitution orders handed down to these 12 Mississippi County officials ranged from \$66 to \$765, all below the amount that Crockett may have over-billed Mississippi taxpayers from academic conference trips.

Crockett's *Operation Pretense* undoubtedly brought back bad memories to the surviving county officials above, as well as their extended families scattered all throughout the State of Mississippi. In writing his book, Crockett described the actions of these county officials in very harsh terms. Because of that, it is likely that, as they read this and the underlying reports available at USMPRIDE.COM, these county officials and/or their extended families have some important questions about Crockett's actions while on faculty at USM. It's very possible that they see Crockett, the author of *Operation Pretense*, as having now become part of the story.